

CASPIAN VIBES

An Azerbaijani-American magazine

JANUARY 2022

FIRST
ISSUE

**TUNING
INTO NATURE**

**BOOK REVIEW:
AFFINITY KONAR'S
DEBUT NOVEL
MISCHLING**

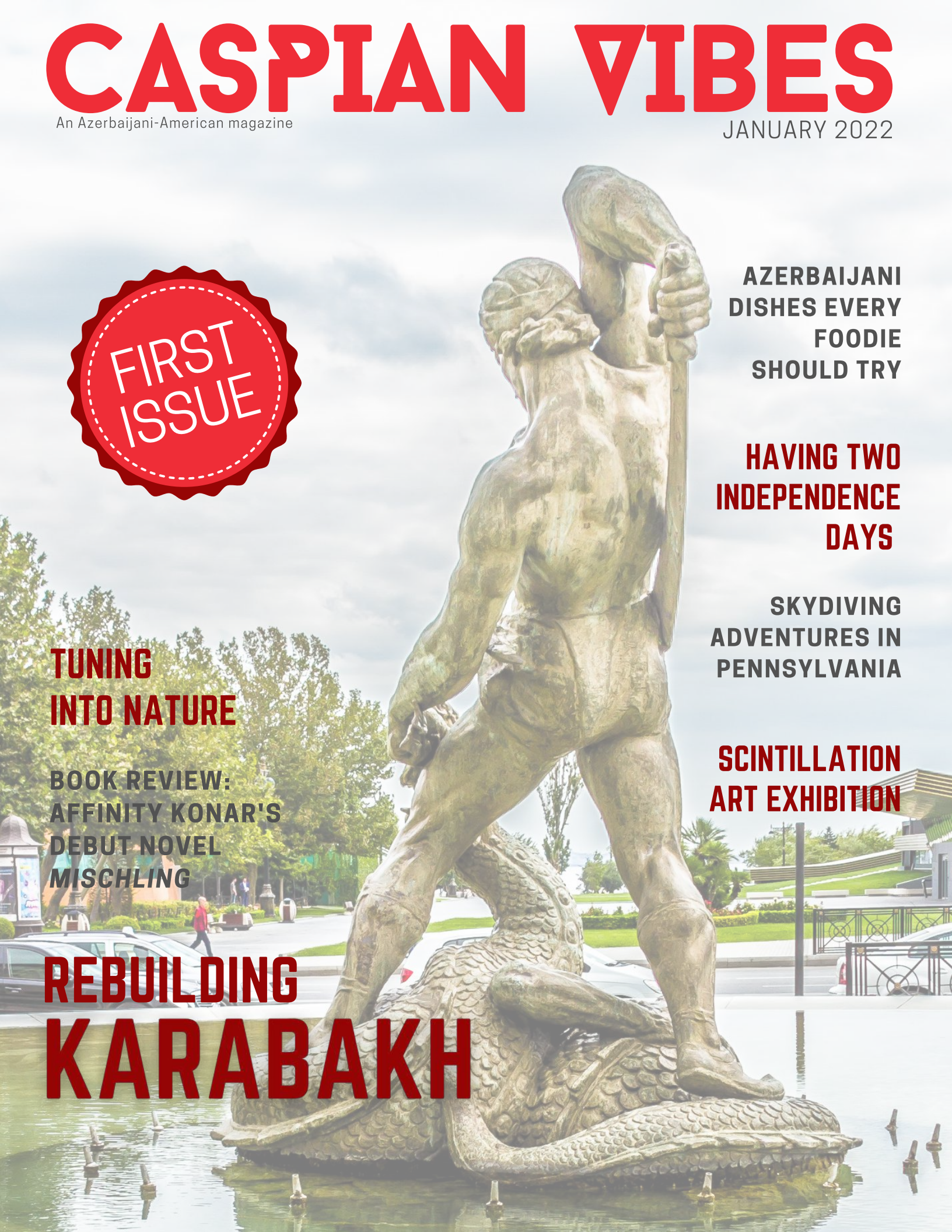
**REBUILDING
KARABAKH**

**AZERBAIJANI
DISHES EVERY
FOODIE
SHOULD TRY**

**HAVING TWO
INDEPENDENCE
DAYS**

**SKYDIVING
ADVENTURES IN
PENNSYLVANIA**

**SCINTILLATION
ART EXHIBITION**



Featured



06 Skydiving Adventures

If you've always wanted to try skydiving but haven't mustered the courage yet, join Naila as she recounts her first time skydiving from thousands of feet up in the air. Was it a tumble or a life-changing experience?

14 Rebuilding Karabakh

After the devastating six-year war that ended in 1994, followed by 28 years of destruction, looting, desecration, and neglect, reconstruction of now-liberated Azerbaijani territories in Karabakh is now in full swing.

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28 Scintillation Exhibition

When it comes to showcasing unique pieces of art created by Azerbaijani artists, you can count on Fidan Badalova to curate the most eclectic and inspiring art exhibition with masterpieces infused with Azerbaijani flavor.

36 Tuning into Nature

How can we make a deeper connection with nature and our environment? Embracing tent life in the woods, slowing our pace, and feeling present in the moment is only the beginning. Discover the beauty of outdoors.

Cover Photo

Bahram Gur bronze statue in Baku, Azerbaijan. Created and erected in 1959 by Aslan Rustamov, Albert Mustafayev and Gorkhmaz Sujaddinov. The architect is Vadim Shulglin.

Contact Us

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CASPIAN VIBES

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ABOUT US

Caspian Vibes is a cultural and educational magazine dedicated to raising awareness of unique Azerbaijani-American perspectives on topics that impact our community. We depend on the generosity of our readers to keep this magazine running. If you'd like to contribute to a growing New England magazine with a fresh community perspective, please consider donating by emailing caspiantvibesofficial@gmail.com for more information. Thank you!

from the editor



Welcome to our very first issue of **Caspian Vibes**, a Boston-based cultural and educational magazine featuring unique Azerbaijani-American perspectives. This magazine has been a long time in the making, and I am excited that our efforts have finally culminated in a publication written by our own community members!

Our Azerbaijani-American community in New England is extremely vibrant, with professionals, business owners, and students making our local neighborhoods lively and diverse. We may have come for its world-renowned universities, but we've stayed for the opportunities and the way of life we've embraced as our own.

As Azerbaijani-Americans, we are proud of our diverse ethnic and religious makeup, representing speakers of Azerbaijani, Turkish, Russian, and Farsi (and many more languages!) in all facets of our society. And we can't wait to show you what our community is all about. So, don't be shy - make an Azerbaijani friend and let life-long friendships begin!

Roza

ROZA EYNULA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

HAVE YOU TRIED THIS YET?

SKY DIVING ADVEN TURES

WITH NAILA SHIRALIYEVA

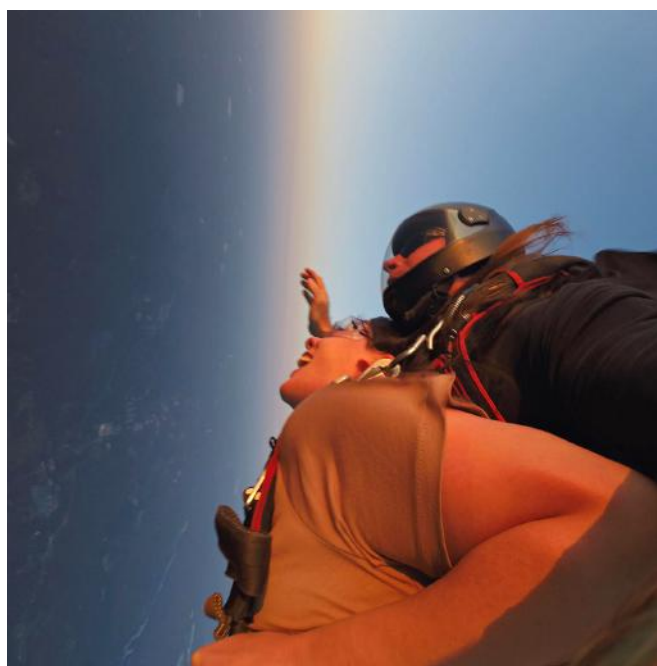
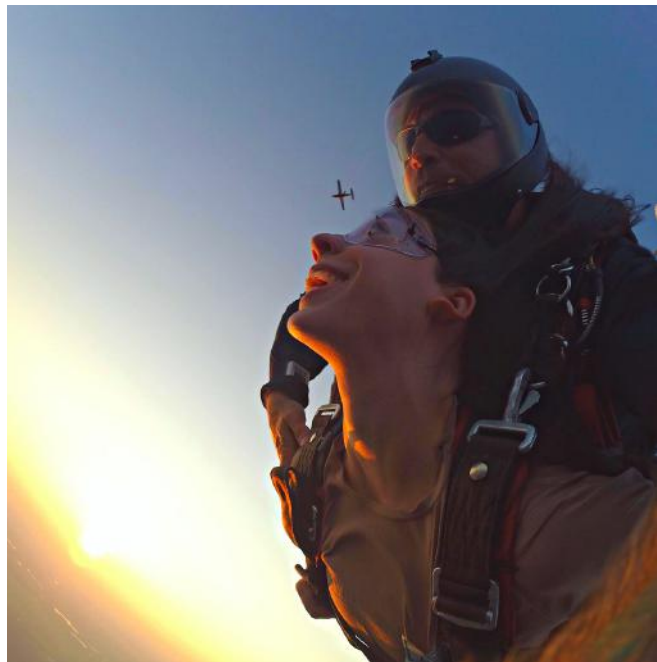
by Roza Eynula

If you're an adrenaline junkie, chances are you have included skydiving on your bucket list. Whether it's curiosity or a desire to get a rush of endorphins, skydiving is often seen as a lifechanging experience. The excitement of freefalling thousands of feet in the air while enjoying majestic views is what makes people keep coming back to the activity. And it's what made Naila Shiraliyeva want to try skydiving for the first time.



ULTIMATE

THRILL SEEKER



Naila, a former Bostonian who now lives in New York, decided to finally give in and try the aerial adventure after her friend's yearlong coaxing. After finding a reputable skydiving company with veteran instructors, they settled on a tandem skydiving experience, where you jump with a qualified skydiving instructor strapped onto you for guidance.

As Naila was filling out the mandatory waiver before her jump, she was taken aback by the explicit verbiage. "It said that you could get injured or die. And if you did, the company couldn't be sued." However, unwilling to back down after coming so far, they signed the paperwork and watched a brief educational video of skydiving accidents.

"We had to wait a while for earlier groups to finish, and by then I was pretty nervous."

The U.S. Parachute Association estimates that 1 in 1,310 skydives in 2019 resulted in injuries mainly due to bad landings by inexperienced skydivers, and 15 fatalities out of 3.3 million jumps. This makes skydiving a statistically very safe activity.

Being the last ones of the day to jump allowed Naila and her friend to observe others gently undulate high up in the sky and pick up a few pointers on their technique. Naila even got acquainted with an expert jumper who was on his 172nd jump that very day. Watching others land safely on the ground, beaming with joy reassured Naila that her experience would surely be worthwhile.

" I W I L L
D E F I N I T E L Y
D O I T A G A I N . "

After jumping from the airplane, Naila's freefall flight took around one minute before she parachuted down, and around seven minutes to land. The landing required precise coordination with the instructor to avoid possible injuries. Despite the motion sickness and marks on her legs from the tight straps, Naila couldn't have been happier with her first skydiving experience. "I will definitely do it again," she admitted excitedly.

So, what advice would Naila give to first-time skydivers? "**Go in the morning.** That way you don't have to wait for anyone, and the instructors aren't tired. Also, **try skydiving over a different landscape and at different times** – during the sunrise or sunset, or somewhere picturesque in Europe or on the beach." One thing is for certain – whether you skydive in the early morning light or the dimming glow of the sunset, skydiving is guaranteed to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience.



BOLD ADVENTURES



Skydiving in Pennsylvania

You can't FLY
if you don't JUMP

Azerbaijani Dishes

EVERY *Foodie* SHOULD TRY

by Roza Eynula



DOLMA

Yarpaq dolmasi, or stuffed grape leaves, is a national favorite of every Azerbaijani. The grape leaves are filled with beef or lamb, rice, onions, herbs and spices, and cooked until tender. Traditionally served with qatiq, or yogurt sauce, **dolma** has become a delicious addition to the *UN List of Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2017.

QUTAB

If you need a light pick-me-up, **qutab** is a perfect savory snack. Made with your choice of meat or herbs and feta, it is usually topped off with butter, pomegranate seeds, or **sumac** flakes for that extra kick. Resembling an *empanada*, this crescented flatbread is as healthy as it is filling. Pair it with a yogurt or thyme tea, and enjoy!



SHISH KEBAB

Meat plays a fundamental role in Azerbaijani cuisine, and no celebration is done without **shish kebab**, or skewered meat. You can grill skewered meat, fish, and vegetables - *slow-roasted* for *maximum tenderness* over a *coal grill*. Marinated with a mix of spices and onion chunks, you can pair it with a fresh veggie salad and *chilled wine*.



PILAF

Ash (pron. ah-sh), or **plov**, is a staple at every special occasion. There is even a unique **ash ceremony** during weddings where ash is brought into the room accompanied by traditional dancing and a roar of applause. With over **40 varieties**, and many more regional variations, **ash** is a special culinary gem that keeps on giving. It includes tender rice infused with rich saffron and a slew of ways to prepare meat. You'll even find chestnuts, dried apricots and raisins inside. So, spoons up!

DOVGA

Dovga is a refreshing soup that you can enjoy during both hot and cold seasons.

Its recipe asks for plain **yogurt** mixed with water, finely chopped **herbs** (coriander, dill, mint), and **chickpeas**. The catch is to continuously stir or the yogurt will spoil. Locals usually make it in a big soup pot and eat it with a slice of bread.



KUFTA BOZBASH

If you like **meatballs**, you are guaranteed to like **kufte bozbash**. Usually served as a main course with a fresh **shepherd salad**, this soup uses round chunks of beef or lamb (the bigger the better!), chickpeas and potatoes. You can add herbs of your liking to the meat and sprinkle fresh mint on the top for a unique kick. **Nush olsun!**

WHY DOES AZERBAIJAN HAVE TWO INDEPENDENCE DAYS?

by Aidin Eminov

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

Azerbaijan has gone through numerous phases of statehood throughout its riveting history. Although there have been numerous conquest and assimilation efforts by surrounding regional powers, Azerbaijan has always preserved and stayed true to its distinct culture. From the time Azerbaijan was annexed to the Russian Empire in the early 19th century, it was subject to Russification and cultural pivoting.

Azerbaijan was a strategically important country in the Caucasus as it had vast oil reserves, and by 1901 was producing more than half of the world's oil. Hence, keeping it in the ever-increasing Russia's sphere of influence was paramount to Russia's regional hegemony.





Pre-1930



1939-1952



1952-1991

RUSSIAN INVASION

Thus, Russian culture, language, and cuisine began swiftly immersing itself within Azerbaijan. Schools began teaching Russian language as a primary language, in hopes that the Azerbaijani language would slowly wither away.

This would continue until 1917 when the Russian empire was toppled by the Bolsheviks led by Vladimir Lenin. Amidst the upheaval, it would take another year for the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic to declare independence on May 28, 1918. It would remain an independent country for another two years, until Russia's Red Army invaded Azerbaijan on April 27th, 1920, and impelled the country to return to Soviet rule once more.

MAY 28 OCTOBER 28

On October 18th, 1991, Azerbaijan Soviet Social Republic (Azerbaijan SSR) declared independence and became what is now the Republic of Azerbaijan. To commemorate both historic dates, *May 28* is now considered the **Republic Day** and *October 18* is the official **Independence Day**.

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REBUILDING KARABAKH

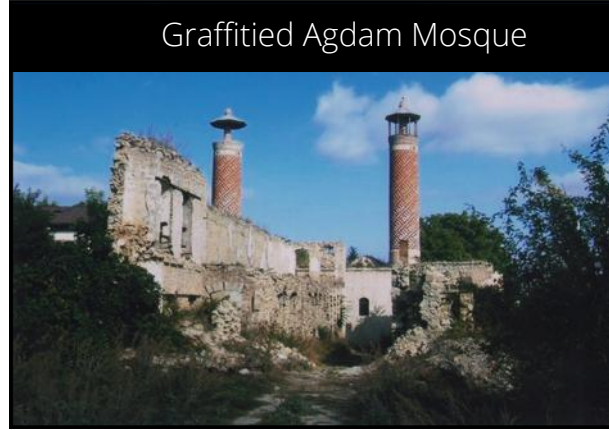
After the devastating six-year war that ended in 1994, followed by 28 years of destruction, looting, desecration, and neglect, reconstruction of now-liberated Azerbaijani territories in Karabakh is now in full swing.

by Roza Eynula, Aidin Eminov

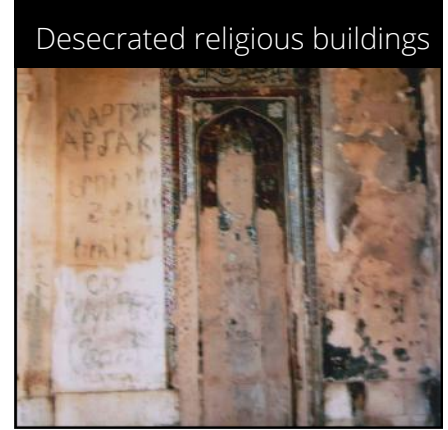
Karabakh is Azerbaijan



Shattered bust of Bulbul



Graffitied Agdam Mosque



Desecrated religious buildings



Animals raised in mosques



Destroyed statues of cultural heritage



Looted buildings



Total destruction of the town of Agdam



"Iron Fist" by Chingiz Ismayilov

**LIBERATED
LANDS**

8

Cities

286

Villages

THE SECOND KARABAKH WAR: A ONE YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

by Roza Eynula, Aidin Eminov

November 9, 2021 marked the one-year anniversary of the end of the Second Karabakh War. Azerbaijanis worldwide took to the streets to rejoice at the momentous liberation of a large swath of Azerbaijani territories that had been illegally occupied by Armenian forces since the early 1990s. The 44-day war ended with signing a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement, which in addition to liberation of several districts from occupying forces also made Armenia withdraw from three large districts adjacent to the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO). Approximately 7,000 soldiers died on both sides, with continuing casualties among Azerbaijani military and civilians due to border and sniper shootings, and landmines that had been planted throughout the region by Armenian forces in the last three decades.

Eight cities and 286 villages were liberated, with many more handed back to Azerbaijan through border demarcations. Culturally significant cities of Shusha, as well as Agdam (now symbolically called the 'Hiroshima of the Caucasus'), Jabrail, Fuzuli, Gubadly, Lachin, and Zangilan were victoriously liberated, although the region now stands in complete ruin. Once-thriving cities were turned into eerie ghost towns due to landmines with no sign of life for hundreds of miles. Carpets and other cultural relics of monetary worth had been smuggled out, while private property has been looted and stripped of everything valuable. Buildings of cultural heritage have been demolished, mosques were defiled by willful neglect and turned into sheds by raising pigs and cows inside, while the rest were outright destroyed.



Azerbaijani refugees fleeing for safety

UNDOCUMENTED RESIDENTS

Foreign citizens of Armenian descent, who had relocated to the occupied Azerbaijani lands without proper residency permits in violation of four UN Resolutions have illegally resided on properties of native Azerbaijani residents who had been forced out in 1990s, are now being offered Azerbaijani citizenship. Those that have declined may have to return to their country of citizenship.

Over **750,000 Azerbaijani residents** that were expelled from the region by separatist forces no longer consider themselves displaced, and their gradual resettlement back into their ancestral homelands can begin once the entire region has been safely and completely demined from **thousands of unexploded ordinances.**

*AT THE
HEIGHT OF
THE CONFLICT,
ONE IN TEN
AZERBAIJANIS
WERE
DISPLACED.*

LANDMINES

According to the grassroots organization *Free Us From Landmines* that works to raise awareness of the thousands of mines installed in the Karabakh region, around 30 civilians were killed and 160 severely injured or maimed since last year alone.

It also estimates that around \$340 million worth of landmines have been installed during the 30-year Armenian occupation. The government of Armenia claims that all landmine maps have been already handed to Azerbaijan, yet the authorities have been conveniently providing them to Azerbaijani officials in exchange for Armenian combatants captured by Azerbaijani forces after the November 10 ceasefire agreement for refusing to lay down arms and continuing to fight, further delaying peace efforts and reconstruction.



A trench dug up between the graves of three sisters in a desecrated Agdam cemetery is being demined.



Siraj Abishov

Similar generic statements have been made by various other NGO and European parliament officials as well; however, their meek stance on a pressing humanitarian crisis with no follow-through or enforcement has permitted continued inaction by the Armenian authorities, further contributing to a steady increase of Azerbaijani civilians losing their lives and limbs to landmines.

Two journalists, Maharram Ibrahimov and Siraj Abishov, and a local government official, Arif Aliyev, were killed in June 2021 when their bus exploded over an anti-tank landmine in the Kalbajar region. Four others were also injured in the incident.

Abishov became an IDP (Internally Displaced Person) during the First Karabakh War, while Ibrahimov was an Azerbaijani refugee whose family was forced to flee Armenia.

“We express our deepest condolences to the victims and their families. We also call on the Armenian authorities to hand over the plans of the mined areas, in order to avoid further civilian casualties,” said IFJ and EFJ General Secretaries Anthony Bellanger and Ricardo Gutierrez.

WILL THE DEATH OF TWO JOURNALISTS FINALLY COMPEL ARMENIA TO HAND OVER MINE MAPS?



Maharram Ibrahimov



ANAMA (@ANAMA_gov_az)



A mine sniffing dog

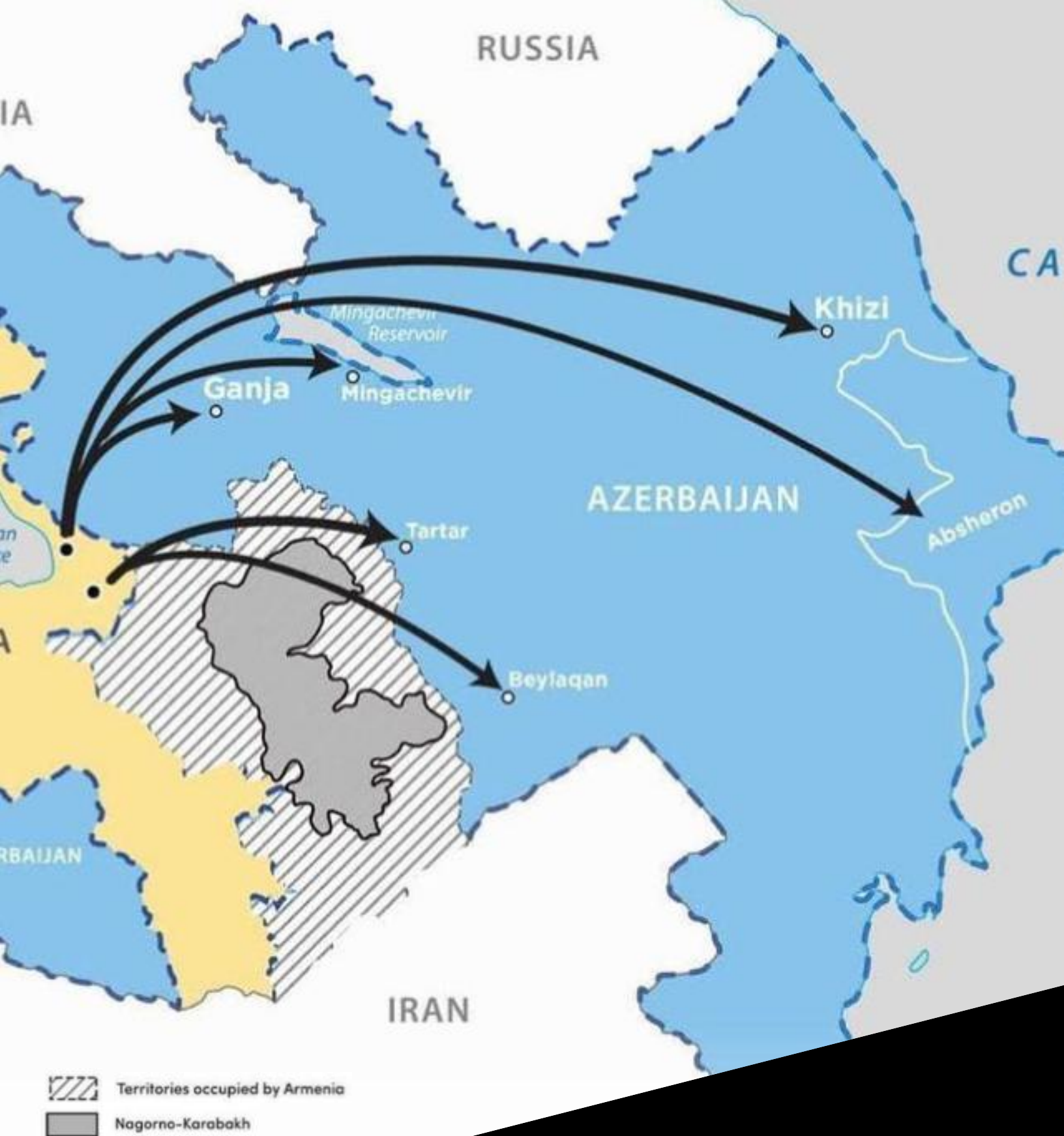
ANAMA

THE MINE ACTION AGENCY OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN HAS BEEN TASKED WITH DEMINING THE REGION SINCE THE END OF THE SECOND KARABAKH WAR IN NOVEMBER 2020.

The UN Development Program (UNDP), an organization tasked with helping countries with various development programs, has pledged \$2.8 million to assist with demining efforts in the region as well. The Mine Detection Dog Center, a Bosnia and Herzegovinian non-government organization specializing in training service dogs, mine clearance, and mine risk education and victims assistance, also sent two mine detection dogs to the area. Bak and Elma were donated by the Marshall Legacy Institute based in Arlington, Virginia. Eight more dogs were sent by MLI in December 2021.

The institute provides humanitarian assistance to war-torn countries and develops conflict-recovery programs to promote hope, growth, and stability.

The region has already begun its transformation with newly constructed roads and setting up infrastructure, but the sheer devastation is so profound that it may take decades to rebuild. Fortunately, there is hope in the air that the region will come alive to its pre-1990s vitality with collective effort.



Densely populated civilian cities, including Ganja, Barda, and Tartar, located well outside of conflict zone were bombed with ballistic missiles by Armenian military forces in 2020. As a result, 98 civilians were killed (including around 20 children) and 414 wounded. Over 3,000 homes and 100 apartment buildings were destroyed, displacing over 40,000 people.

Source: Human Rights Watch



With many towns in total ruin, the Karabakh region is now referred to as the 'Hiroshima of the Caucasus'.

GRIEVANCES FILED IN COURT

*European Court of Human
Rights, 01/15/2021*

During the Second Karabakh War, Sep-Nov 2020

- Article 2 - violation of right to life
- Article 3 - violation of prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- Ill-treatment and torture of military personnel and civilians
- Forced displacement of civilians due to war

Separate request submitted on October 26, 2020

- To stop indiscriminate missile attacks on civilians, public property, and infrastructure in residential areas, public premises, and cemeteries within Azerbaijan
- To stop military, political, and financial support to Armenian militia groups operating on Azerbaijani territory
- To outlaw Armenian and foreign national mercenaries and volunteers from the conflict area
- To withdraw its armed forces illegally stationed on the international recognized Azerbaijani territories
- To stop institutionalized ethnic hatred and policy towards Azerbaijanis based solely on ethnicity

During the First Karabakh War, 1987-1993

- Displacement of over 750,000 Azerbaijanis from their homes and property in Karabakh (additional 250,000 from Armenia), totaling around one million displaced Azerbaijanis
- Ill-treatment and disappearance of 4,000 Azerbaijani nationals without proper investigation
- Destruction of cultural and religious property on the grounds of ethnicity

CONSTRUCTION UNDER WAY



The construction of a sixty mile highway, six lanes wide, that began in 2021 connecting Fuzuli to Shusha is nearly complete.

Source: Azeri Times



MOLLA PANAH VAGIF MONUMENT

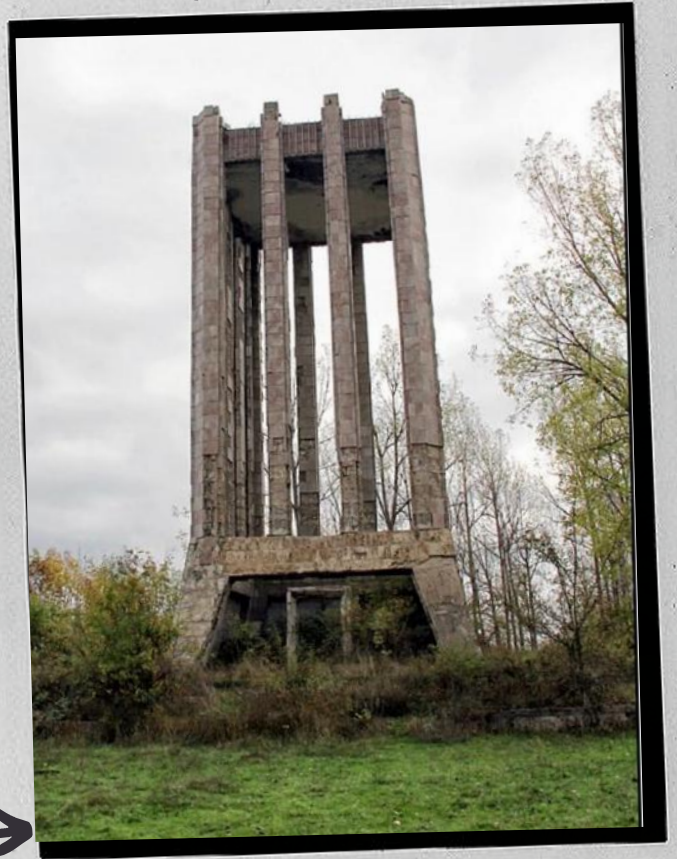
SHUSHA CITY, AZERBAIJAN

In 1982



First built during
the Soviet era

In 1992



Stood in ruins for 29
years until Shusha was
liberated in 2020



MOLLA PANAH VAGIF MONUMENT

The Vagif Mausoleum in Shusha was first erected in 1982 to honor the prominent 18th-century Azerbaijani poet and diplomat Molla Panah Vagif. During the First Karabakh War in 1992, it was almost completely destroyed. Restoration began in March 2021 and was finished in July.

RESTORED



Constructed within eight months, Fuzuli Airport is now complete and has welcomed its first passengers.



Forging
AHEAD

TOGETHER

Resilience

IN OVERCOMING
ADVERSITY

**TAKE
ACTION**

@CASPIANVIBES



INSIDE
SCOOP
WITH

FIDAN BADALOVA

by Roza Eynula

CURATOR OF SCINTILLATION EXHIBITION

Fidan Badalova is a maverick when it comes to showcasing unique pieces of art created by Azerbaijani artists. To date, she has held four grand exhibitions across the globe, attracting inquisitive diplomats, art connoisseurs, enthusiasts, and students alike to marvel at masterpieces infused with Azerbaijani flavor.

Her exhibits were a big hit in Paris, Luxembourg, Brussels, and Dubai, the last one being 'Once upon in Azerbaijan' in 2019. Not letting the pandemic dampen her creative spirit, she hosted her fifth exhibition, *Scintillation* – this time online.

ABOVE

Painting by Delafuz Baghirova,
Karabakh Horses (Azerbaijan)

EACH
PAINTING
HAS ITS
OWN UNIQUE
STORY TO
TELL THE
WORLD

Scintillation Exhibition

The idea of holding a virtual exhibition came to Mrs. Badalova at a time when she was experiencing an artistic lull. Being restless as the entire world shut down due to the Covid-19 pandemic, she decided to hold virtual art classes for her students to maintain their motivation to keep at their craft. Wanting to make remarkable pieces of art more accessible to a bigger audience through technology and bring some much-needed distraction during the pandemic, Mrs. Badalova decided that now was as good a time as ever.

The exhibition featured 47 talented artists from 11 different countries, including Azerbaijan, and was showcased by Kunstmatrix, a digital platform for curators and artists to exhibit their work in 3D. Paintings by Azerbaijani artists featured unique national elements such as pomegranates and figs, Karabakh horses, the world-renowned mugham, and Caspian Sea oil rigs, while international artists expressed their artistic creativity by featuring uplifting themes of animals, portraits, and personal motifs on family, nature, and music.



Painting by Abbas Mammadov,
Caravan (Azerbaijan)

ARTIST

Spot light

For Ali Ridho, proudly representing Indonesia, it was his first-ever exhibition. Painting a Legong dancer dressed in a traditional Balinese costume, the art piece was complemented by a 25-minute music piece to bring the enchanting dancer to life. The jury decided to include this painting in the exhibition as an homage to talented beginner artists.

Ivan Pili, the Italian painter whose painting 'Grace' features black-and-white motifs of simple happiness, is an eclectic artist who is also a folk music composer.



Painting by Ria Shanker
Pathos (UAE)



Painting by Halima Alasgarova
Mugham (Azerbaijan)



Painting by Elchin Bunyatov
Soulmates (Azerbaijan)

Mrs. Badalova follows her heart when selecting artwork for her exhibitions, and feels that each painting has its own unique story to tell. Azerbaijani paintings are usually bright and airy in style, making still life paintings in high demand with the local audience. European artists, however, prefer to paint in more muted hues highlighting impressionist, art deco, and cubist influences. Regardless of the artistic dichotomy, the eclectic art appealed to every collector's taste.

So, what's next for Mrs. Badalova? She says she dreams of doing an exhibition in the US once the pandemic is over and travel restrictions are lifted, but she wants to experiment with different types of art for variety. She is a champion of art education who has been hosting free art classes for the local youth and helping with art supplies for autistic children for over two years. She plans on continuing her work at a local non-profit art center, MINCA, to help art enthusiasts of all ages develop a deeper appreciation for art.

6 REASONS TO GET AN **AZERBAIJANI** FRIEND

by Roza Eynula

today!



HOSPITALITY AND TEA TIME

Azerbaijani people are known to be extremely hospitable and friendly to guests. Going out of their way to make you feel welcome is a national Azerbaijani characteristic. So, don't get surprised to get invited over for tea and sweets right away.



YOU'LL BE FRIENDS FOR LIFE

Azerbaijanis value long-lasting relationships, and having friends from childhood to adulthood is a way of life. But don't worry, they are open-minded in making new friends. So, if you befriend one, rest assured you'll become lifelong friends.



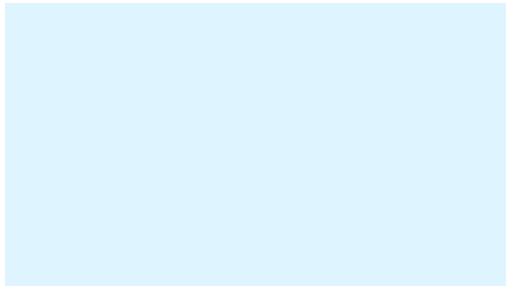
MANNERS ALL THE WAY

Azerbaijan may be leaning towards the west, but it still follows eastern traditions. Showing nice manners to others, especially the elderly, women, and guests, is something children learn from a very young age.



TOLERANCE IS A WAY OF LIFE

Centuries of ethnic and religious intermingling makes Azerbaijanis unique. Growing up among Muslims, Christians, Jews, and the many ethnic minorities that peacefully live side-by-side, it's no wonder why Azerbaijan is consistently ranked as the most irreligious country in the world.



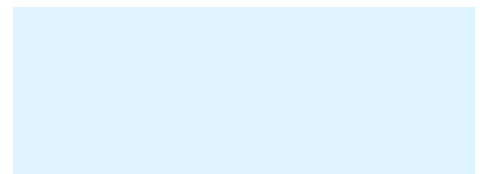
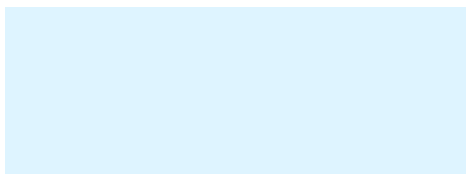
WOMEN RUN THE WORLD

Who doesn't like strong women? Azerbaijani women are independent, powerful, and plain awesome. They can make a mean pakhlava, are skilled at work, amazing mothers, and can be a boss at parallel parking. What more do you want?



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Boasting 99.79% literacy rate, Azerbaijanis consider themselves well-rounded and stay abreast of current news every day. They educate themselves on history and readily discuss any topic that comes up. Nothing is off limits, so let's chat.





Affinity Konar

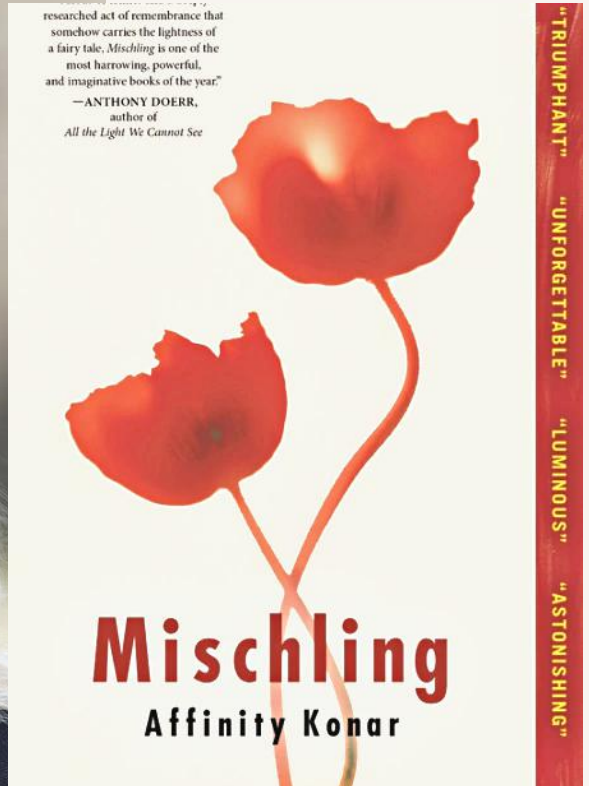
BOOK REVIEW

by Roza Eynula

Affinity Konar's debut fictional novel *Mischling* is a somber tale of death and survival during the darkest time in human history - the Holocaust.

Set during 1940s Holocaust in German-occupied Poland, *Mischling* follows the lives and tribulations of 12-year-old identical Jewish twins Stasha and Pearl Zamorski as they attempt to survive the fated concentration camps. The somber title *Mischling*, meaning a person of a mixed race in German, sets the muted tone of Konar's harrowing debut book as it explores pain and survival, love and longing, past and future.

Being 'lucky' enough to be twins, they are plucked from the deadly grip of gas chambers and hard labor and into the laboratory of Dr. Josef Mengele, the notorious Auschwitz Angel of Death. Known to have a maniacal fascination with multiples in search of eugenics, Mengele subjects every identical sibling to torture and dubious experiments, both physically and psychologically – of course, all in the name of research.



Considering himself to be a true scientist, Mengele ignores all medical ethics and forges on with his cruel and bizarre punishments. (Note: It is now known that he experimented on close to 1,500 sets of twins in his short span at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.)

The story begins when Stasha and Pearl arrive at the Zoo, a place crawling with other identical sets of siblings, but mainly misery and desperation. The children are scared, hungry, and broken. To keep the children obedient to Mengele's manipulations and experiments, fear of severe punishment – or worse, separation from their twin, is instilled into them to ward off those that might disobey. Along the way, Stasha and Pearl meet other children, both younger and older – those who are mature well beyond their young years and have seen pain, death, and hopelessness. They settle into their daily lives of hell and hope to survive yet another day unscathed, creating stories of adolescent adventure and hopeful fantasies to keep going.

Each child learns to deal with the pain by learning to rely on their twin and each other. Powerful friendships are formed, bringing resilience and cooperation to the forefront of their young lives. They learn to bargain, to scour for necessities, and make do with the little they had. They may be frail, but they are not broken; they may be lonely, but they are not alone. Dr. Mengele has taken many things from them – their families, their bodies, their clothes; but their minds will always be theirs to keep.

Mischling is about resilience, joy, and gratitude; but mainly it is about forgiveness. Although it is a fictional narrative written in lyrical prose, *Mischling* is partly based on the real-life survival story of Romanian twins Miriam and Eva Mozes, who later became an outspoken advocate for Holocaust education and awareness. The grief and hope of the events that transpired both in real life and in the story will make the reader reflect on the meaning of true forgiveness and punishment. How should war criminals be dealt with? Can cruelty and pain be forgiven, or is justice better served with revenge? Will punishment of any magnitude ever be enough? Tough read or not, stories within *Mischling* have a lot of teachable moments to readers of all ages.

“

Mischling is about resilience, joy, and gratitude; but mainly it is about forgiveness.

“



QAKH
AZERBAIJAN

The luscious green
landscape of the
mountains

TUNING INTO
NATURE

by Hokuma Karimova



Lifestyle

Khatin Asgar-Kazimzade is an avid camper and nature lover enjoying the outdoors with her son.

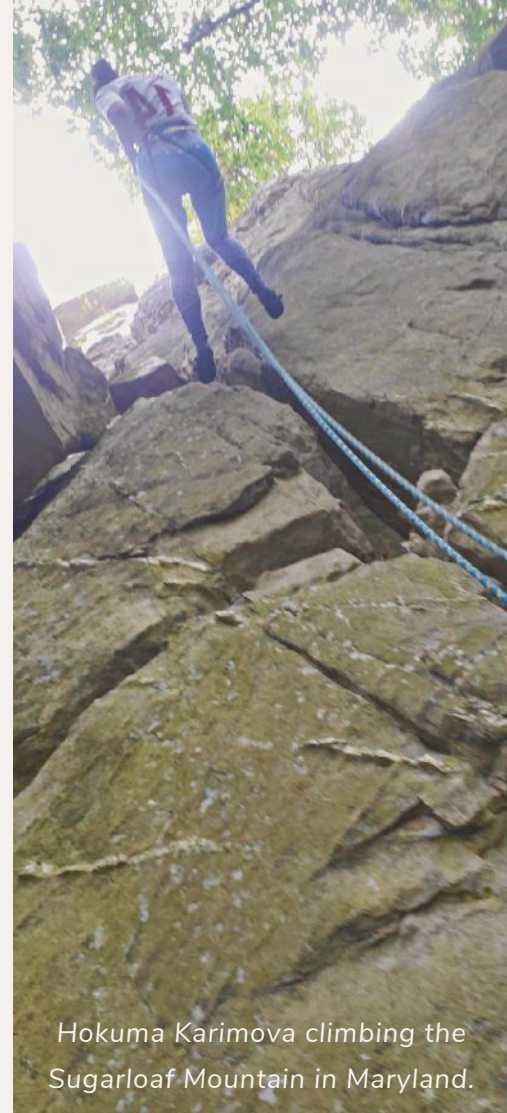
Becoming one with Nature

The hands feel through the rugged and smooth spaces of the rock. The feet rest on two small protruding points on the wall.

Slowly and steadily, the hands and feet move in an alternating dance to the top. The ground below grows distant.

With the harness tied to a rope, adrenaline and safety pulse through the veins. Consumed by the present moment, the mind quiets, and you become one with the nature.

"This is the beauty of rock
climbing outdoors."



Hokuma Karimova climbing the
Sugarloaf Mountain in Maryland.



A view from the Appalachian
Mountains at Sugarloaf Mountain, MD.

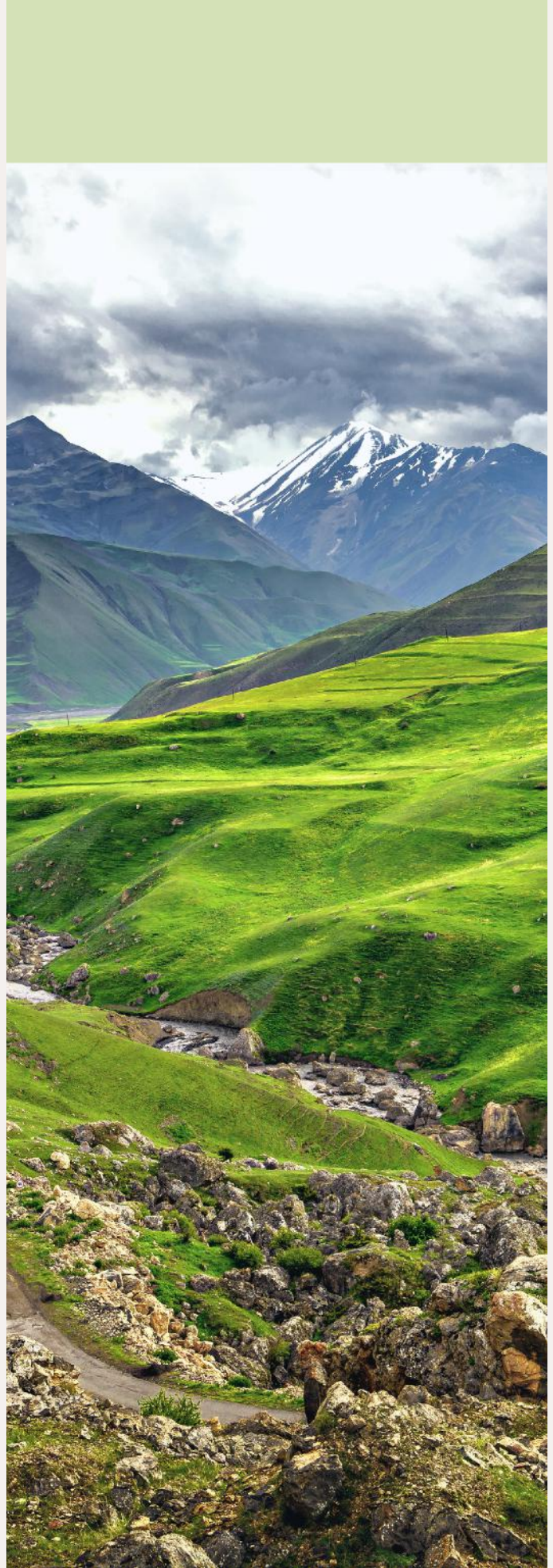


Feeling alive

Bringing all our senses online into this instant opens up a doorway to a magical place of aliveness. Yet, tapping into this abundance is rare for most.

The COVID pandemic, with frequent lockdowns and social distancing rules, has put a dent into most of our travel and adventure plans.

Still, those who crave solace in nature will find a way to it.



Deeper Connection

Love for nature is shared by many Azerbaijanis.

The country is considered an oasis, housing nine of the eleven climatic zones. Here you will find snowy mountain tops, lush green forests, open sandy beaches, semi-arid deserts, blue calm lakes, and much more.

Recently, I had a chance to speak to a friend, Khatin Asgar-Kazimzade, who lives an active outdoor life. Her favorite pastime is spending the weekend in the mountains, camping in nature, listening to good music, hiking with family, and cultivating deeper connections.

This lifestyle became even more trendy in recent months. Fueled by pandemic restrictions, many individuals decided to trade the hustle and bustle of the city for the quiet outdoors.

With affordable gear rentals, and many groups to guide the way, being one with nature has never been easier. To schedule your next adventure in Azerbaijan, check out the events by organizations such as [OUT of the WILD](#) (@Out.of.the.Wild.Azerbaijan), [Camping Azerbaijan](#) (@campingazerbaijan2014), and [Hiking Azerbaijan](#) (@hikingazerbaijan).

Below are Khatin's personal top recommendations for best places to visit.



Khatin is embracing the tent life in Ismayilli, Azerbaijan, and adding some rhythm with music.



| Maral Gol
Goygol National Park

1

Ilisu, Qakh region | 2





3

KATEKH

close to the
Zaqatala region

RESTORING OUR ECOSYSTEM

Sadly, these sanctuaries are in need of our immediate protection.

In 2021, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published their sixth report on Climate Change, which states that: “It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere have occurred.”

What does it mean?

Simply that in the last 200 years, human influence has warmed the climate at a rate that is unprecedented. This destabilizes natural cycles formed in the past thousands of years, leading to great destruction and damage for life as we know it.

When it comes to Azerbaijan in particular, the World Bank prepared a Climate Risk Report that predicts the following impacts from increased climate change:



Khinaliq village, Azerbaijan



Temperatures in Azerbaijan are projected to rise at a faster rate than the global average, with potential warming of 40°F by 2090.

- The strongest warming will occur in the summer months, with average temperatures between July and September projected to rise by almost 6°C by the 2090s.
- Such a sharp increase in temperature will reduce agricultural productivity, exacerbate issues of desertification and soil salinity, and increase demand for irrigation, putting great pressure on demand for water.
- The warmer climate will also pose public health threats, increasing the rate of heat-related medical issues in urban areas, and lengthening the seasonal window for malaria.

Quba, Azerbaijan



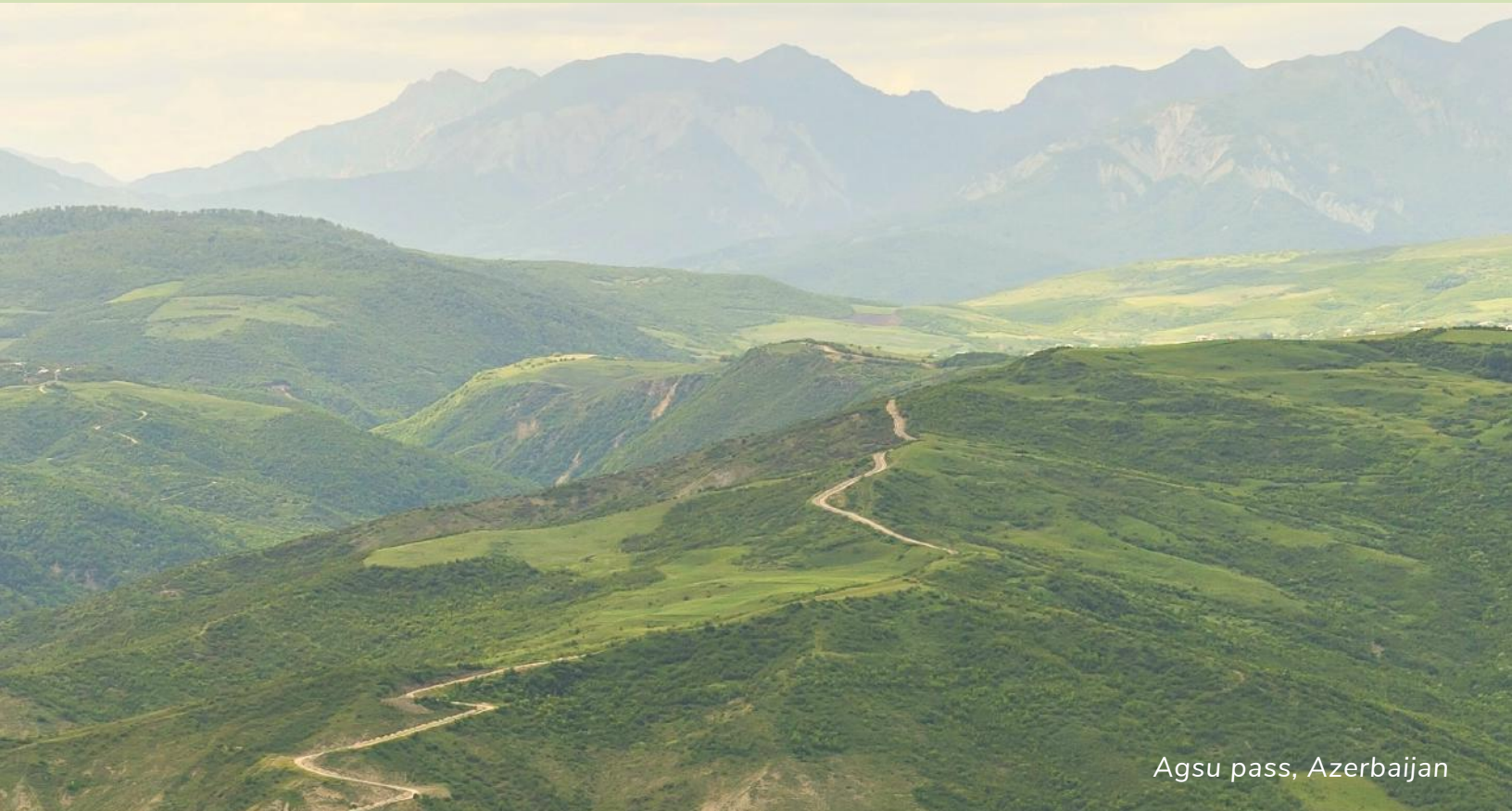
Climate Risk Report

- Impacts from climate change will be disproportionately felt by those least able to adapt, such as those in rural areas who are reliant on rain-fed agriculture, which will be negatively impacted by frequent droughts.
- Poorer communities that depend on water infrastructure and lack diversified income sources will be least able to adapt their livelihoods to such disasters.

In Azerbaijan, groups such as Ecofront are raising awareness and encouraging individuals towards action. Considering that a big population in the country relies on the agricultural sector for employment, protecting, mitigating and preserving the environment is a priority.

Reconnecting to nature has never been so healing.

***Protecting it
has never been
so urgent.***



Agusu pass, Azerbaijan



The mountains of Kilyazi
Azerbaijan



*Thank
you!*

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